

The Battle of Balaklava and the 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique

by Dr Douglas J Austin 16 [TWC 26(3) p32 2008]



English-language texts provide little detail of the successful relieving charge of the French 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique, which prevented the disastrous Charge of the British Light Brigade from becoming a catastrophe. Many French texts have remained 'francophone' to this day, but the French charge was described on pp 27-33 of Volume 2 of César Bazancourt's book 'The Crimean Expedition, to the Capture of Sebastopol'. That book, which caused much anger in Britain, was published in English by Sampson, Low & Co. during 1856. Here, I interpolate that description into my translation of pp 313-327 of Volume 2 of Germain Bapst's 'Le Maréchal Canrobert: Souvenirs d'un Siècle', first published in 1898, which offers a complete description of the Crimean War from the French point of view. My source is the 1902 Plon edition. In the early 1890s, Bapst conducted prolonged interviews in Paris with Marshal François Certain Canrobert (1809-1895), one of the three successive French Commanding Generals in the Crimea. To those, he added rigorous searches of the French Bibliothèque Nationale and the public records of the Ministries of War and of the Navy, as well as official documents, letters, newspapers and memoirs. At first, Canrobert considered that the preparation of his Memoirs would be impossible, because of the loss of his effects and documents during the Commune in 1871. After the Marshal's death, however, Bapst was provided with extensive notes on his earlier life, dictated while he was Governor of Lyons in 1862/63. Granting that Canrobert was very old, Bapst remarked on his extraordinary and well-known memory for detail, including his correction of Bapst's own notes.

The relevant pages on the Battle of Balaklava read as follows:-

"On October 25th, towards seven in the morning, gunfire was heard in the rear of the camp, on the Balaklava side.¹ The General-in-Chief was somewhat surprised at that and left at once for the crest of the plateau, to the left of the Col.² He arrived there towards eight o'clock. Lord Raglan was there already, searching the landscape with his telescope³; to his left, on the crest, was the Vinoy brigade; a little in the rear, the Espinasse brigade and Captain Thoumas' battery, and others even more distant; General Bosquet positioned himself beside the Vinoy brigade. The escort Spahis⁴ of General Canrobert arrived at the gallop as though in a true fantasy, which caused a stir among the staff and the troops which were there."

“The battle of Balaklava is unique of its kind. It took place, indeed, as on a race-course considering the corps of occupation and the staff who found themselves installed on a crest, like spectators who would attend a spectacle especially given for them in their boxes or their chairs. The two Generals-in-Chief knew about the situation. A body of twenty-five thousand Russians and approximately three thousand riders had advanced themselves from the valley of the Tchernai'a to attack Balaklava, to seize it and to deprive the English army of its provisioning base. Initially the Russians had found a line of five redoubts defended by Turks with some English guns. These redoubts, built much too far from any support, had easily been captured and the Turks who held them had fled without great resistance.” [*Incorrect. The Redoubt 1 Turks held out for more than 1 hour.*]

“At eight o'clock in the morning, at the time when the two Generals met, the sun had risen, a greyish autumn sun and not very warming; the panorama which it lit up was splendid both in its extent and the diversity of its aspects: on the right, on the horizon, the dark blue sea, the ruins of the castle of Balaklava and its waters whose lapping, made, under the light, a mass of brilliant stars. In front of the Col of Balaklava, where the Generals-in-Chief were⁵, the plain stretched out; on the left rose the Fedioukine Heights and Mount Hasford [Hasfort] whose valleys or gorges connect with that of the Tchernai'a; well to the rear, the ruins or white cliffs of Inkermann, then, still beyond that, a line of mountains whose purplish summits were lost in the sky; within this scene thousands of combatants were moving about: in the conquered redoubts, Russian infantrymen worked to turn the guns round⁶; Turks, in groups, fled in the plain like herds of sheep which have noticed a wolf.”

“In front of Balaklava was the 93rd Highlanders, with some English sailors and veterans, in battle formation: we clearly distinguished Sir Colin Campbell, his aide-de-camp Shadwell, and the colonel of the Highlanders Ainslye [*Ainslie*], a tall thin man with white hair, very well known in Parisian society: as a very young second lieutenant, in the garrison of Saint Helena, he had had the honour to be presented to Napoleon and to speak to him several times, which he readily described. Behind, the English Light Cavalry, the men on the ground with their horse's bridles in their hands, formed a mass of varied, hard-to-distinguish colours in the distance. Lord Cardigan, on horseback, could be recognized in front of his men, and we also saw very well Lord Lucan and his staff, a little nearer.”

“The Heavy English cavalry were still closer; Scots Greys, with their scarlet coats, their enormous white leather gauntlets and their black bearskins, mounted on gray horses, as their name indicates, looked like giants at a distance. The Inniskillings [*Enniskillens*] and the Dragoon-guards, whose brass helmets blinked and made as many bright light sources, prolonged their red line.”

“To the rear, the Russian cavalry now advanced against the Highlanders. There were Lancers or Uhlans, Cossacks armed with lances, Dragoons and Hussars. The latter - the regiment of the Duke of Leuchtenberg - wore a splendid sky-blue uniform with silver ornaments; they stood out against the other horsemen: because the lancers, Cossacks or dragoons wore, without distinction, large grey-brown cloaks. Suddenly, this body divided: part fell upon the Highlanders. Impatient, the latter seemed to be agitated and were preparing their weapons. We heard, or rather we guessed at, the stentorian voice of Sir Colin Campbell: "Not so quickly, Highlanders; wait for the command,"⁷ and we saw the line of mountain men recover their steadiness: (Russian) riders and horses became anxious at this immobility, and within fifty meters they stopped, almost hesitating. Then came an order from Sir Colin: the rifles drop, a salvo of gunfire resounds. Riders fall, the horses escape, and the whole body, making a half-turn, flees, while a second discharge hastens their retreat.⁸ Then, from the group of the spectators who are on the crests, came this cry: "Bravo, Highlanders.”

“The other group of cavalry, which had become detached, moved towards the Heavy English cavalry, at the head of which was its commander, General Scarlett with Colonel Beatson and Captain Elliott, these two last were legendary in the Indian Army: seeing what was happening, the general advanced his wings to form a half-circle; then, when the Russians were at five hundred

meters, he put all his line at the trot, with himself in the centre and at the head. When he was at two hundred meters, he ordered the gallop and forced himself into the Cossacks. It was then a superb fray, a combat of Homeric heroes or valiant knights of the Middle Ages: we saw the sabres rising and dropping: pistol shots flew in all directions: it did not last for long: the big red riders made only one mouthful of the Cossacks who turned their bridles, closely followed by the Heavy English cavalry. They were two immense ocean waves which advance with nothing being able to stop them: the first, very 'Brown' with lance pennons; the second, 'Red' with bearskins or brilliant helmets. These waves undulated according to the terrain: they entered a small valley. We did not see any more the 'Browns' who were down there; they came out very soon, and it was the turn of the 'Reds', which followed them, to disappear and to reappear soon after⁹; and thus this superb charge carried on. At the end, the 'Rally' recalled the 'Reds', who reformed and returned at a slow trot to the place that they had before the fray. At this fantastic sight, there were, from the spectators on the crest or half-way down the hill, stamps of joy, acclamations, hurrahs, cheers: handkerchiefs were waved, kepis were put at the end of rifles; it was an indescribable enthusiasm, and Lord Raglan, anxious since the morning, seemed to cheer up."

"It must have been about ten o'clock. All the plain and the edges of the plateau were on the move. The Heavy English cavalry quietly returned to take up its original position. One might say that it was like a field of animated poppies. In the space, in front of the place where the charge had occurred, were riderless horses - agitated, neighing, champing, running in panic; the Highlanders were still in line of battle in front of Balaklava, and the English Light Cavalry were on their horses in two lines whose brilliant hussar uniforms and the lance pennons waving in the wind made them appear longer than they were. The Duke of Cambridge arrived on the heights and went down from the Col, followed by the Coldstreams and the Grenadiers, with their bearskin hats; more to the right, his two regiments of Highlanders also advanced, who rejoined their Balaklava comrades. They marched with lengthened pace, to the strident and shrill sounds of their bagpipes. Cathcart's division appeared a few moments later, closely following the Grenadiers¹⁰: as it debouched, it went to the left of those in the valley, at the foot of the heights."

"At this moment, coming in the opposite direction and skirting the height, appeared a regiment of Chasseurs d'Afrique¹¹ who passed in front of the staff and the French troops that remained higher up. The small Arab horses, with long tails, pawing and neighing, chewing their bits, very impatient to gallop, and the Chasseurs, alert in their sky-blue jackets, gave a new note of colour to the variegation of all these troops."

"General Canrobert was chatting with Lord Raglan. The French general highly congratulated his colleague on the brilliant charge of his Heavy cavalry, and insisted on the needlessness of any new offensive.¹² On the crest, we could say in the front row seats, an enormous crowd had gathered. At the sound of the guns, soldiers of all types, employees, officers, merchants, idlers (of course) the cloud of newspaper correspondents, painters, draughtsmen or photographers¹³, were there, chatting, agitated, exchanging their impressions, a mobile crowd, stirred up and noisy. Lord Raglan was still chatting with General Canrobert, other officers exchanged conversations with their neighbours. Thus, for a long time, we saw General Bosquet in discussion with Mr. Layard, later the ambassador from England in Constantinople, and better known still as an archaeologist than as a military writer and diplomat. It was he who brought back to the British Museum all the enormous bas-reliefs from the palace of Assurbanipal, in Nimroud, to the British Museum. While the general and the diplomat were speaking, the opinion spread that the battle was finished and that the Russians would not come back any more to attack our lines. At this time, we believed that we saw them disarming the Turkish redoubts and that they were removing the guns from them.¹⁴ All the western part of the battle field, on the Balaklava side, was clear. The Russians concentrated at the bottom of the (North) valley, which takes the shape of a horseshoe whose two advanced arms were formed: that of the west, by the hills where rose the redoubts captured from the Turks; that of the

east, by the Fedioukine Heights. The two points of the horseshoe were well covered with guns and infantry, which, because of their isolated position, could possibly be beaten in an attack.”¹⁵

“Some time after the charge of the Heavy cavalry, we believed that we saw the Russians carrying away the guns from the most advanced Turkish redoubt - from the one which was easiest to retake.¹⁶ "When this detail was pointed out to Lord Raglan, he appeared offended to be obliged to abandon those guns to them." General Canrobert pointed out to him that that was of no importance. These redoubts were not useful. The Russians could not maintain themselves there. "Why go to seek the Russians? Let them come, we are on excellent ground, let us not move."¹⁷ However, Lord Raglan was anxious; he first sent an aide-de-camp, the commander Whiterall [*Wetherall*]¹⁸, of his staff, to Lord Lucan, then after he called General Airey and spoke with him. We saw the latter taking his sabretache, using it as an improvised desk to write a note in pencil.¹⁹ With the note written, the two Generals exchanged some further words, and Lord Raglan, calling Captain Nolan, of the 15th Hussars, aide-de-camp of General Airey, entrusted him with the paper to carry to Lord Lucan.²⁰ This meeting took place in sight of all the spectators who well knew the three characters who played a part there, because Captain Nolan was popular in the camps where he had been seen a hundred times, mounted on superb horses, making extraordinary gallops and jumping the most difficult obstacles. He was a handsome fellow with large rather protruding blue eyes, a slightly receding chin, curly hair and a very neat fair moustache.²¹ He had acquired a great reputation in the sporting world by publishing, the previous year, a book on the training and maintenance of horses which had been greatly appreciated. On this day, he wore the uniform of the 15th Hussars which suited him splendidly: the tight-fitting Spencer, the scarlet Hongroise, Souvaroff boots and the Talpak.”²²

“Captain Nolan, a devoted horseman, believed that nothing is impossible for a well-directed mounted troop; he even maintained that infantry squares, guns, batteries and bayonets could not resist against a vigorous charge. He identified himself so very much with the English cavalry that his very self-esteem was hurt by its poor performance at the Alma and in the flank march on Sebastopol.²³ Perhaps at this moment he felt that he held in his hands the opportunity for the Light Cavalry to repair their damaged reputation, also he perhaps exaggerated the role entrusted to him, in the words which he exchanged with Lord Lucan a few minutes later, while giving him General Airey's message.²⁴ The order was thus conceived: "Lord Raglan wishes the cavalry to advance to the front and try to prevent the enemy from carrying off the guns. French cavalry is on your left. Immediate.””²⁵

“Down in the valley where Lord Lucan and Lord Cardigan were, one could not see the batteries and the battalions on the hill on the left point of the horseshoe²⁶; also, the two Generals believed that Lord Raglan wished them to throw themselves at the base of the horseshoe, on the mass of Russian artillery and infantry. Thus, they hesitated. Lord Lucan, addressing himself to Captain Nolan, said to him: "Attack what? Which guns?" The latter, showing the batteries and the troops at the base, answered: "There are the guns, There are the enemy." On this word, Lord Lucan gave Lord Cardigan the strict order to charge while saying to him: "Lord Raglan wants it thus, we have nothing else to do but obey." The latter understood that it was madness, but he obeyed nevertheless; he put its brigade into two lines and left at a trot. The comings and goings of Lord Raglan's aides-de- camp, the steadfast look of his face, had been noticed by the staffs and even by the soldiers, and we wondered what was going to happen.”

“At first, when the Light Brigade, light hussars, lancers and dragoons - light horsemen or chasseurs - was seen to set off, we did not understand; in front of them were masses of cavalry, Russian batteries and several regiments of infantry. They were going to force themselves into a half-circle of grapeshot and musketry. After two hundred metres, they stopped.²⁷ An ah! of satisfaction came from every mouth. The pause had been made only to carry out the order: "Lower curb-chains.”²⁸

Far from stopping, these riders launched themselves into a hellish charge. At our distance, we made out the famous officers of this light cavalry; at the head was Lord Cardigan and, to his right, Captain Nolan²⁹; then, the English appeared to us: Lord George Paget, son of the cavalry general at Waterloo; Lord Paulet, Lord FitzGibbons [Fitzgibbon], Colonels Douglas and Shewell, the French staff Colonel de La Tour-du-Pin and the Sardinian Captain Landriani, military attaché to the English army: both had not wanted to miss this opportunity to take part in this ride which promised to be exciting.”

“The brigade formed three lines; ten paces in front, Lord Cardigan alone, with his impressive height, admirably upright, on an enormous brown thoroughbred brown bay horse with four white feet. He wore, like the former Generals of Hussars, the uniform of the regiment of which he had been a colonel, with the talpak and the white heron plume, a royal blue fur-lined coat covered with gold and an cherry Hongroise, also gold-braided. Three officers in various uniforms followed him: in the brigade, there were hussars which were noticed especially by their orange-yellow braids and their cherry-coloured trousers; lancers with blue jackets with white facings, with clear gray breeches with white bands, chapzkas and lances with pennons, and finally of the light dragoons in red. It was a bright multi-coloured palette.”

“On Lord Cardigan's order, the brigade left at the trot in three lines: at eight hundred metres from a battery of twelve glittering brass heavy guns, it broke into a gallop; the guns let fly, covering everything with smoke, but, when dispersed, let us see Lord Cardigan, always alone, in the lead, penetrating between the guns, and, behind him, chopped up by grapeshot and bullets, the three pierced lines, shredded, but always in line and at the gallop, and in front of them, at the diagonal, the horse of Captain Nolan, his body inclined at first, then soon hanging down on the saddle, lifeless.³⁰ On the crest, it was amazement which dominated: "What are they doing?" General Bosquet, turning to Mr. Layard, shouted to him in front of everyone: "It is superb, but it is not war. - It is madness.. ." ³¹ "Where are they going?" we repeated; and we remained amazed at this admirable and useless heroism. From all directions, Cossacks, Hussars and Russian Lancers ran around them. It is a new tournament with single combats; but, on the flanks, Russian infantry and artillery showed themselves and fired from all directions on the remains of the light cavalry. Above all, it was from the Fédioukine Heights, on their left, that the most intense fire came.”

“When General Canrobert saw Lord Raglan sending the order to charge, he had understood that it only concerned attacking the ends of the horseshoe and he had sent, by Commander Durand de Villers, the order to the 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique, which had come to form up in front of the Fédioukine Heights, to charge on the batteries which occupied it and to extinguish their fire.³² While passing in front of Captain Thoumas' battery, Commander Durand de Villers told them to support the Chasseurs d'Afrique. Captain Thoumas was not only a brilliant gunner; he was also an administrator, a writer and a philosopher, and above all a man of heart and character. He commanded one of the most beautiful batteries one could see: superb and quivering horses, gunners, all experienced men, of good height, admirably involved and devoted. At the call of the aide-de-camp, the guns and caissons were set to the trot and, at the risk of breaking their necks, the battery descended from the height into the plain like a whirlwind.”

“The Chasseurs, as soon as the order was received, set off: two squadrons, led by the old Mameluke Abdelal and Captain Dancla, scattered like foragers; the small horses galloped and leapt on the stones and the undergrowth, crossing all the obstacles. General d'Allonville then ordered the last two squadrons to charge in their turn, more to the left, on the infantry which was coming to the rescue. As for the first two squadrons, we saw them, having reached the height of the battery, make a turn-round and fall upon the Russian gunners from the rear. Captain Dancla, at the head, was knocked stiff and dead; but in a flash his horsemen, without stopping, entered the battery, whose gunners, sabred and hustled, however managed to throw themselves on their guns, to bring the

horses and to couple them up, and to make them slip away at the gallop, followed by the infantry. General d'Allonville was there, with his thin face and his skeletal frame. He urged, directed and ordered calmly and with the admirable knowledge of combat which made him an accomplished man of war. The movement succeeded: riflemen and gunners who wanted to shoot the English cavalry as it retired gave up their project. But the masses of infantry, pushed back at first by the impetuosity of our Africans, rallied and, reinforced by the Wladimir regiment, prepared to retake the offensive with their artillery. General d'Allonville seized the moment and caused the retreat to be sounded. Twelve Chasseurs and two officers - one of them Captain Dancla - were killed.³³ Fortunately the objective had been achieved: the English cavalry was relieved on its left, and the retreat, carried out in time, had not left a moment when its success could be compromised. Why did not the English cavalry, instead of going at the bottom of the funnel, attack, like the Chasseurs, the other point of the horseshoe? Like them, it would have succeeded.”³⁴

“The Chasseurs, with General d'Allonville at their head, remained calm and reformed below the staff, the regiment facing ahead, ready to charge again if necessary. At the same time as the Chasseurs, the remains of the English Light Brigade returned too. The riders returned as fragments: there was a group of Hussars, a band of Dragoons or Lancers; then Lord Cardigan, alone, with a wounded knee³⁵; wounded, dismounted riders, horses without their master; the chief officers tried to recover all these groups; they counted each other, called out for each other and sought news of each other; after a quarter of an hour, only one hundred and ninety seven men assembled in the ranks; one of the regiments of light dragoons had only ten!”³⁶

[*For comparison, my translation of Bazancourt's text follows:-*]

“The brigade of the Chasseurs d’Afrique arrived as we have said to support the left of the English cavalry, when the light brigade launched itself upon the Russian redoubts. General Morris was unaware of the order sent to Lord Lucan, and could not understand this movement³⁷; nothing motivated such reckless temerity. However, faced with the disaster that threatened Cardigan’s brigade, he could not remain inactive; he suddenly moved his echelons forward and, without hesitation, launched two squadrons of the 4th Chasseurs d’Afrique, supported by two other squadrons from the same regiment, on the Russian battery which crowned the large wooded knoll.³⁸ These brave squadrons, with General d’Allonville and their Colonel Champeron at their head, immediately galloped to climb the steep slopes that rose ahead of them. The Russian battery towards which they directed themselves saw this movement and tried a few useless rounds. The cavalry had already reached the crest of the knoll and advanced direct on to the guns, but they were hastily limbered up and withdrawn at the moment when the squadrons of the 4th arrived at the emplacement they occupied. Commandant Abdelal threw himself in pursuit with his intrepid Chasseurs. A thick line of sharpshooters and two Russian squares hidden by thick brush rose up suddenly and opened a terrible fire.”

“Captain Dangla [Dancla], carried away by his courage, threw himself upon the serried ranks of enemy bayonets and fell mortally wounded; the Chasseurs who followed him rushed forward with heroic valour, nothing could stop them, and they made a bloody path in the Russian squares. Captains Ollier and Burtin were in the thick of the melee; it was a hand-to-hand struggle, where leaders and soldiers fought desperately. The largest and most deadly enemy batteries, had stopped firing on the English cavalry; the goal was attained. General Morris, seeing a regiment of Don Cossacks rushing to the rescue of the broken squares, while two others crowned the upper crest of the knoll and prepared to fire upon our Chasseurs, had the retreat sounded and rallied the 4th Chasseurs behind the 1st, a squadron of which, deployed as sharpshooters, protected the return of the English cavalry and allowed Lord Cardigan allowed to reform the remains of his brigade.³⁹ The vigorous and daring charge of the Chasseurs d’Afrique Africa stopped the Russian artillery fire that threatened to completely wipe out the cavalry, so imprudently engaged, during its retreat. The

Chasseurs d'Afrique thus signalled their appearance in the Crimea by one of these acts of boldness and vigour of which they had given so much evidence on the battlefields in Algeria. The losses of the Chasseurs d'Afrique in this affair were 13 dead, including 2 officers; 7 injured, 2 amputees; 16 horses killed, 12 wounded."

[*Returning to Bapst's text:-*]

"Lord Raglan was irritated and thoughtful: General Canrobert had no more need to insist on remaining on the defensive. In his letter to the Minister, the French general could write with truth: "Such was this combat which got off to a bad start and which, in my opinion, should not have happened at all."⁴⁰ The charge of the Light Cavalry was an useless and consequently awkward operation; it provided the enemy with a partial success, it caused without reason the loss of more than three hundred and fifty riders, but it still remains in the minds of the English cavalry as an act of heroism worthy to flatter the national self-esteem and to inspire poets. It is a beautiful inheritance for people to preserve the memory of similar feats of arms." "However, this famous charge did not occur without making floods of ink run. Lord Raglan declared, in his despatch, that Lord Lucan was the sole author of this inopportune operation because, by virtue of his discretionary power, it would have been easy for him to prevent it if he considered it dangerous. The latter protested, the government had to stand by the chief and Lord Lucan was recalled. In fact, Lord Raglan had given a rational order, to attack the left wing of the Russians, the French cavalry having to make an identical and simultaneous movement on their right wing as shown in his order.⁴¹ Given the practices of the press, blame and criticisms rose in England against the General-in-Chief who had ordered the charge; and in contrast, naturally, Lord Cardigan was exalted as the man who had carried it out. These praises obscured Lord Raglan's flatterers, and, after his death - in his lifetime such improprieties would not have been allowed - some of them, like Colonel Carlthorpe [Calthorpe], went so far as to accuse Lord Cardigan of cowardice: he had fled in front of the Russians and had abandoned his men. The whole army had seen him in the lead entering the Russian battery, and he was seen again, after the destruction and the dispersion of his brigade, making his way slowly back at the head of a group.⁴² Lord Cardigan had to go to court to stop these calumnies."

"The famous Kinglake did not dare, after the failure of Colonel Carlthorpe [Calthorpe], to accuse the General of the Light Cavalry of cowardice, but he described him as "weak-spirited"; and as he lent others his extravagant ideas, he ascribed to Lord Raglan, on this occasion, fantastic designs likely to make one believe his brain had been troubled, when in reality he was always calm and of good sense. Thus the famous charge of Balaklava not only stirred up fierce and enduring enthusiasm but also brought to light the small mean actions of jealousy of the Chiefs stooges and flatterers."

"In the evening, while everyone was asleep, everything returned to calm; only the Vinoy brigade was ordered to come to camp in front of Balaklava, beside the Highlanders. There were three thousand men whom General Can-robert withdrew from his positions to ensure the safety of our allies' port."

Further relevant information, printed in 'The Times', is as follows:-

'The Times', 23 September 1864

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—With reference to the statement which appears in The Times of the 16th of August from Mr. Hedworth Joliffe, late Lieutenant of the 4th Light Dragoons, I have two remarks to make:- 1st, that the brilliant charge of the Chasseurs d'Afrique on the Russian guns on our left was not made, as General de Todleben writes, and as Mr. Joliffe seems to believe, "to alleviate the retreat" of our

Light Cavalry on the day of Balaclava, but was an independent charge to which the Chasseurs advanced (as could be seen by all who were on the ground above the scene) almost simultaneously with the advance of our leading squadrons.⁴³ The battery which the Chasseurs charged was on rising ground on the right of the Russians, and some distance from the guns attacked by the Light Brigade, and it is no doubt true that the 4th Light Dragoons, who diverged rather to the left as they advanced, were materially benefited when they retired by the results of the charge, as the gunners had not recovered the effects of it as the remnants of our horse were falling back; but a little attention to time and position (which it is no discredit to Mr. Joliffe not to have been able to bestow on the situation at the time) might have satisfied the writer of the letter that the denial of De Todleben's statement that the Chasseurs charged after the English were obliged to retire was correct. The second point in his letter which I desire to notice is Mr. Joliffe's assertion that "this charge has been ignored by our historians." The contrary is the case; at least, I am not acquainted with any account in print of the Light Cavalry combat at Balaclava which does not mention in terms of praise if it does not do full justice to the gallant onslaught of the Chasseurs d'Afrique on the Russian guns. Your obedient servant,
W. H. RUSSELL.
Loch Rosque, Dingwall, Sept. 19.

'The Times', 7 June 1881: [DJA translation of French text]

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir, - I have returned from London, where I was spending a few days. One of my first visits was to the Panorama of Balaclava. I saw with sorrow that only my father, General Morris, commander of the French cavalry in the Crimea, was missing from this page of military history, which is shared by our two nations.

I have the honour to submit to you a letter (attached) from General Pajol, which appeared in *Le Figaro*, and that the General has authorised me to send to you. I would be grateful to you, M. Editor, to be so good as to publish it in your esteemed newspaper. To the General's letter, I attach the following comments:- Five years ago this feat of arms was attributed to Marshal Bosquet. Today, only Marshal Canrobert appears in the tableau, which should have been composed in conditions of scrupulous historical accuracy. Following the battle Her Majesty Queen Victoria honoured my father in awarding him the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath. You must understand, Sir, the feeling, on my behalf and on behalf of my brothers and sisters, has caused me to act.

Please accept, M. Editor, with all my thanks, the assurance of my highest consideration.
Luneville, June 3. MORRIS.

"Sir, - In the issue of Thursday, October 7, your newspaper published, in the English correspondence, an article signed 'Johnson,' referring to the brilliant feat of arms carried out by the French cavalry at Balaclava, and attributing to General Bosquet the credit of the relief brought by the French to our brave allies. The career of Marshal Bosquet was so full that I can, without affecting his memory and only in the interest of history and justice, make you aware that the honour of that quite spontaneous attack⁴⁴ belongs to General of Division Morris, who commanded the French cavalry in the Crimea. It was he, in fact, at the head of four regiments [sic: squadrons] of Chasseurs d'Afrique, which rushed to gallop from the heights occupied by our camps and had the good fortune to save what it was possible to save of the English cavalry. General Morris had fine records in his military life, the tradition of which is the only wealth of his children; but his two sons, officers in the army, are very young to claim their father's rights. I was, as chief of staff, with General Morris on the day of Balaclava, and as such I consider it a duty to offer to the memory of my former chief that glorious military operation which the English army and England have

recognized with the most honourable testimonies of admiration. I authorise you, sir, to make what use of this letter as is convenient for you, wholly in a historical interest.

Receive, Mr. Director, etc.

General of Division, Count Pajol, commanding the 4th Infantry Division's 2nd Corps.-Sedan, October 8, 1875.”

Acknowledgements: I thank Timothy Pickles for equestrian advice, Jerome Lantz and Tom Muir for advice on the 1st Chasseurs d’Afrique and Mme. Katharine Garcia-Austin for applying corrective polish to my translations.

Notes:

1. This corresponds with my previous assessment of civil twilight at Balaklava on 25th October, 1854, at 06.43 and sunrise proper at 07.13 (based on UT + 3 hours). The Russians reportedly began their move towards Kamara at 05.00. Major Low of the 4th Light Dragoons, who alerted the British picquet there to the Russian approach, may have ridden directly to Redoubt 1 (Canrobert’s Hill) to warn the Turkish defenders, who, for their part, opened fire on the Russians at or shortly after first light. The Russians replied with massed gunfire from Kamara and eventually took the redoubt at or shortly after 08.00.
2. W. H. Russell’s map of the Cavalry Action of 25th October, 1854, was published in his ‘*The British Expedition to the Crimea*’, Routledge, London, 1858, reprinted in 1877. It shows 3 successive locations for Raglan, on the crest, below it and, finally, on the plain to the west of the Light brigade’s starting point. Russell shows 636 as the Light Brigade’s strength. He shows Redoubts 1 and 2 with open gorges to the south-west and Redoubts 3, 4 and 5 with open gorges to the south. Some accounts suggest that they were closed works.
3. Raglan’s telescope (optics unknown) is held in the National Army Museum, Chelsea, as NAM 1963- 10-214.
4. Commanded, at that time, by Paul de Molènes. After being wounded, he remained in the Crimea and assembled material for his book ‘*Les Commentaires d’un Soldat*’, Jouaust et Sigaux, Paris, 1886.
5. The Generals were apparently not as far to the south-west as the Col itself. See 2, above.
6. Interesting. The British 12-pounders were reportedly spiked by British sappers (who gained 3 DCMs) before they were abandoned to the Russians. If they had been effectively spiked, there would seem to have been no point in turning them round. Several accounts speak of the Russians using our own guns against British troops.
7. A revision of Campbell’s reported words; “93rd! 93rd! Damn all that eagerness!”.
8. Incorrect. The Russians were driven off by one long-range and one medium range volley, followed by a third from the grenadier company of the 93rd.
9. I note the effects of ground undulations in the South Valley, as seen from above. Those in the North Valley deeply affected the sight-lines of the British Cavalry prior to the Light and Heavy Brigade’s advances.
10. This usefully conforms with previous evidence that Cambridge’s 1st Division descended the Col at 10 a.m., closely followed by Cathcart’s 4th Division.

11. This would be the 4th Chasseurs d’Afrique, perhaps accompanied by a squadron of the 1st. They may have gone down by the Woronzoff Road. Raglan had ordered that British troops should not use that way to the plain.
12. Canrobert, noted for caution and indecisiveness, betrayed none of the latter at this moment.
13. I note that artists and, remarkably, photographers may have been present on the Sapoune Ridge. Joseph Archer Crowe, correspondent and artist of the *‘Illustrated London News’* was certainly down near the Causeway Heights, as described in his *‘Reminiscences of Thirty-Five Years of my Life’*, John Murray, London, 1895.
14. Yet again, uncertainty as to whether the Russians were actually removing British guns! A number of accounts, however, do insist that that action did take place. Raglan’s 4th Order (dictated to or composed by Airey) specifically states ‘...try to prevent the Enemy carrying away the Guns...’
15. This shows that the prospective targets were the Fedioukine Heights and Redoubt 3 on the Causeway Heights. The Russians had taken Redoubt 4 in their first rush, had disabled its guns (according to Liprandi) and had then abandoned it.
16. This confirms that the Causeway Heights target was Redoubt 3, known as the Arab tabia.
17. See 12, above. Some accounts suggest that this was a vigorous discussion, verging on argument.
18. This cannot be correct. Wetherall was sent off with the 1st Order to the Cavalry at or shortly after 08.00. Elsewhere, I have presented evidence that Nolan was sent down with a verbal order to Lucan, returned, and was sent down again with the written 4th Order at 11.00.
19. This records the writing of the fatal 4th Order, but does not mention any discussion with Nolan.
20. In contrast, Calthorpe stated that Raglan, Airey and Nolan had a discussion. Hugh Rose’ account stated that - as an afterthought - Airey wrote out and handed the written 4th Order, directly or otherwise, to Nolan.
21. This may be the only record of Nolan’s physical appearance.
22. This uniform, worn only by Nolan in the Crimea, made him uniquely identifiable, even at a distance.
23. Confirmed by entries in Nolan’s campaign diary. His opinion was shared by many in the British Army.
24. The order was written and signed by Airey, but begins “Lord Raglan wishes...”. Did Airey disagree with it?
25. Incorrect. The 4th Order reads “Lord Raglan wishes the cavalry to advance to the front - follow the enemy and try to prevent the enemy carrying away the guns - Troop Horse Artillery may accompany - French cavalry is on your left. Immediate.”

26. Nor, according to Lucan and others, could they see the redoubts or guns on the Causeway Heights. Nolan and (probably) Colonel de la Tour du Pin, as well as Cardigan and/or one of his aides-de-camp, appear to have reconnoitred the situation shortly before the advance.

27. This pause is recorded only in the account by Private Robert Grant of the 4th Light Dragoons, but may well have taken place, to permit the action described as 'Lower curb-chains.' (See 28.)

28. An order to 'Lower curb-chains' would require the rider to dismount and remount. This may therefore be an error for 'Raise curb-chains', which would be done from the saddle. Drawing in the bit rein would give the rider greater control over his horse and would normally be done before drawing swords. Certainly, Cardigan was very concerned that the charge should be well controlled.

29. Several accounts place Nolan close to Captain Morris of the 17th Lancers by the squadron of direction (on Cardigan's left) before the advance. Several others place him on Cardigan's right, after the advance began. They accord with my evidence that Nolan crossed the front and tried to redirect the brigade towards Redoubt 3.

30. British accounts have Nolan killed by a shell splinter and falling from his horse very soon after the start of the Light Brigade's advance, long before Cardigan reached the Russian guns.

31. By no means complimentary to British efforts, it is not certain which French general said this. Allegedly, Bosquet denied doing so and there were definite statements that it was Canrobert himself who spoke.

32. From Pajol's letter of 1875, it is clear that Canrobert's order did not reach the 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique.

33. Bazancourt's account states that 11 troopers and 2 officers were killed.

34. This is a debatable outcome, given that the Odessa regiment had formed square near Redoubt 3 - in anticipation of an attack by British cavalry. Cathcart's 4th Division should have pressed forward, but did not do so, reportedly due to Cathcart's sluggishness. In contrast, W. H. Russell's introductory chapter to 'The Crimean Diary and Letters of Sir Charles Ash Windham', Keegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London, 1897, records his conversation with Windham on that very topic on the day after the Charge as follows:- "...The appearance of these two great bodies of infantry, streaming down from the plateau into the Valley of Balaclava, produced, no doubt, a considerable effect upon the Russians; and Sir George Cathcart, a masterful man, who had already worked himself into a frame of mind conducive to violent enterprise, because his counsels, for an instant assault upon Sebastopol, had not been taken, was eager to dash at the Turkish redoubts, and had, indeed, whilst his skirmishers pressed forward and engaged the Russians in a brisk musketry encounter, occupied one of them [Redoubt 4], when he was once more ridden on the curb, and restrained from the bold offensive which he contemplated. The next day I rode up to the walled enclosure, which was subsequently named "Cathcart's Hill", because the General's Headquarters were near the elevated ridge, whence there was an extensive view of the city front. There was a group of officers looking down towards the ground on the right, from which Evans' Division had that morning driven the Russians, who had come out to establish themselves in force upon it; and amongst them was Colonel Windham. Presently, he came to the place where I stood watching the movements of the troops on the extreme right towards Inkerman, and, with an abrupt "Good evening," asked me "if I had seen the cavalry charges down below the day before, and what I thought of the whole affair?" I said I had been all the morning in my tent, continuing the work of the night before, and writing about the battle. "And what have you written?" I said "I hoped it would all appear in good time." "I hope," said he, "that you let people at home understand what a lot of muddling muffs we have out here. What on earth did they mean by hurrying us down there?"

Two divisions! And then making out that we were late! Late for what? Why, when we did want to do something, we were not allowed. I believe if my General had been allowed to go on, and the whole force had been advanced, we'd have shoved every manjack of these Russians up into the mountains, and retaken the guns. That's my private opinion, mind you! And I don't want my name in the papers.'" N.B: I am not aware of ANY order from Raglan or Airey to Cathcart demanding a pause by the 4th Division.

35. This states that Cardigan was not the first to return from the Charge, but does confirm that he was alone when he did so. He was 'tickled' by Russian lancers, but did not report himself wounded in the Charge.

36. This count was taken at ca. 12 noon. Many stragglers came in later to reduce the apparent losses.

37. This shows that the French cavalry were unaware of the forthcoming British advance.

38. Only the 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique charged the Russian battery on the Fedioukine Heights.

39. The action of this squadron supports the later claim of the 1st Chasseurs to the battle honour 'Balaklava'.

40. I cannot disagree with Canrobert's assessment of the Battle of Balaklava, which he promptly sent to Marshal Vaillant, the French Minister of War in Paris.

41. Most interesting! This statement, derived from Canrobert, does indeed provide an acceptable rationale for Raglan's written (but grossly ambiguous) 4th Order. Multiple communication failures led to disaster.

42. Cardigan rode back alone. No British accounts suggest that he was leading back survivors.

43. Russell states his view that the charge of the 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique was an independent action taken by its commander, General Morris. He also states that the Chasseurs set off very shortly after the Light Brigade.

44. Pajol, on the spot with General Morris, confirms that the attack by the 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique was not performed on orders from above.